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ABSTRACT

Changes in marriage and the family from 1950-74 in five nonsocialist countries were explored. The countries selected for the study were Japan, the Netherlands, West Germany, Sweden, and the United States. Most of the data were derived from the United Nations' "Demographic Yearbook," although various original sources from the particular countries were consulted. Concentrating on marriage formations and divorces, the paper noted rises, declines, surges, peaks, and valleys in the rates for the five countries over the 25 year period. Similarities, dissimilarities, and trends among countries were compared and results of the marriage and divorce curves were summarized in five general statements: (1) there was no strong relationship between the number of marriages during a given period and the number of divorces five to ten years later; (2) the relationship between the number of marriages and number of divorces differed in the various countries and at different times; (3) regardless of marriage patterns, divorces increased in all of the five countries in the same period, 1964-65; (4) youthful age at marriage increased fertility and the likelihood of divorce, although other variables must also be taken into account; (5) crude birth rate was level in Japan and fell in Sweden, the Netherlands, the United States, and West Germany. Computer-generated graphs on marriage, divorce, and births are presented in the appendix. (Author/DB)

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FAMILY TRENDS IN SELECTED NONSOCIALIST COUNTRIES

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Marriage and the family are ancient and ubiquitous institutions. Their origins are shrouded in long years of human history. In a study of the family, one might therefore be tempted to stress continuity and stability. Yet it is change and adaptability to other institutions that seem to be the dominant features of the family.

The purpose of this paper is to explore some changes in marriage and the family in selected nonsocialist countries. At an early stage of the preparation of this paper it was thought that the patterns discovered in a few industrialized, nonsocialist countries would serve as a generalized guide to what is going on in similar countries throughout the world. As the data were being collected, it became necessary to take a more modest stance. While some regularities emerged, there were also important differences among the countries causing one to doubt whether the marriage and family patterns in any five countries could serve as a guide to some larger number of countries.

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At any rate, the countries selected for study were Japan, the Netherlands, the Federal Republic of Germany, Sweden and the United States. The time period studied is 1950 to 1974. Most of the data were derived from the United Nations' Demographic Yearbooks, although various original sources for the particular countries were consulted.

The paper concentrates on marriage formations and divorces. We attempt to do several things with regard to these vital rates. First, we note the rises and declines, the surges, and the peaks and valleys in the rates and number for the various countries over the twenty-five year period. When appropriate, we indicate the similarities or dissimilarities among the selected countries. We then attempt to explain the discovered trends. For example, does a surge in marriages follow inevitably by twenty to twenty-five y[illegible] a surge in births? Do divorces go up five or so years after an increa[illegible]n marriages? Birth rates and age at marriage patterns are investigated but chiefly as they relate to the major variables under consideration, marriage and divorce. A caveat is in order. Our efforts to explain marriage and divorce fluctuations and inter-societal differences are meager. Sometimes the best we can do is to explain what does not seem to be an explanation. At other times we suggest variables, such as per capita gross national product or proportion of women in the labor force, that could have an impact on marriage and divorce rates.

The appendix of the paper contains computer-generated graphs on marriages, divorces, and births. These graphs, it is thought, vividly portray the changes about which we will be talking. Please pay particular attention to the notations on the vertical axis for in order not to distort the data each graph covers only the lowest and the highest rate for the country in question. For example, the graph for the number of divorces for the United States runs from about 370,000 to 970,000 while the comparable graph for Japan runs from 69,000 to 112,000. Let us now deal with the substance of the paper, turning first to marriage in the various countries.

For any society, statistics on marriage are extremely important. To the extent that they indicate that new family units are being formed, marriage rates tell us much about the individuals, the social and economic conditions of the society, and the future needs and potentials of the society. Individuals getting married make a certain commitment to one another. More than this, they exhibit a faith in the future and a desire to be part of that future. Since most people marry, have children and rear them, we can assume that there are positive personal values to be achieve in marriage as well as obvious advantages to the society. Despite the freedom of the single state, marriage and family formation have come to be defined as part of the "good life." When more people marry, and even when people marry at younger ages, it can be interpreted as a desire on their part to achieve the good life.

But what if the marriage rate declines or people postpone marriage? It could mean that marriage is losing its appeal, that, increasingly, the rewards of marriage are diminishing, or, put differently, that alternatives to marriage are judged more desirable than marriage. On the other hand, a declining marriage rate may indicate that it is not through their own choice people are postponing or forfeiting what they consider the good life. A significant imbalance of the sex ratio would mean that everyone who wanted to get married could not do so. Poor economic conditions, housing shortages, or an increase in the employment of women may result in a delay in marriage.

The marriage rate is thus an indicator of various personal values and social conditions. It is also an important factor to consider in social and economic planning. Family formation through marriage signals the need for different kinds of housing, furniture, appliances and the potential for all of the good and services associated with the bearing and rearing of children.

Just as the marriage rate is an important social characteristic of a society, so also is it important to know the aages at which people marry and any changes in this phenomenon. Youthful marriage is associated with higher fertility in at least three different ways. First, the younger a woman marries, the more years of exposure to pregnancy there are. Second, among women who marry very young there is very likely a preponderance of women who see their role primarily as that of wife and mother. Clearly they have not prepared themselves for a career and most probably do not plan to do so after marriage. Having a large family validates their occupational choice of wife and mother. Were they to restrict their family size drastically, the job of mothering would be less demanding and would cease at an earlier stage of their marriage. The third way in which youthful age at marriage affects fertility is through what can be thought of as a speed-up of generations. If a given generation marries younger and has children at a younger age, a new generation is produced earlier and is ready earlier to begin childbearing. Thus age at marriage can accelerate or retard the attainment of a given population size simply by shortening or lengthening the number of years between generations. Finally, youthful age at marriage repeatedly has been found to be associated with marital unhappiness and divorce.

I am sure by now that you are convinced that it is useful for societies to know at what rate their population is getting married and what age they are doing so. What, then, do the data show for our selected countries?

Marriages

Japan

If we go back to the year 1950, there have been some fluctuations in

the number of marriages in Japan with about 715,000 in 1950 and reaching the peak of over a million marriages in 1973. Turning to the crude marriage rate, there were a few years when the rate of marriage increased over 10 per thousand population but for most of the period 1950 to 1974 there was little change until the year 1958. After that year, the marriage rate began to level off at 9 per 1,000 and recently it has been about 10 per 1,000 population. In sum, for Japan there has been a steady increase in the number of marriages and there also has been a slight increase in the marriage rate.

West Germany

The Federal Republic of Germany reached its peak in post-war marriages in the year 1950 with over 500,000 marriages. The number of marriages then went down and did not get back up to 500,000 mark until 1960. Thereafter it continued to go down rather steadily, reaching its present number of 415,000 marriages per year. The low number of marriages, relatively speaking, in recent years can be traced, in part, to the low birth rates at the end of World War II. These babies were reaching marriageable age in the late 1960s and the early 1970s. The fact that the rate and the number of marriages continues to decline suggests that other factors may be operating than the prior low birth rates.

When we turn to the marriage rate we see that for the period beginning in 1950s the rate was approximately 10 per thousand population. It hovered around 8 or 9 through the year 1968 after which time it began to drop and stayed at 7 per thousand for four years. The marriage rate for the Federal Republic of Germany now stands at 6 per thousand, one of lowest that has been discovered but not, as we shall see, the absolute lowest.

Netherlands

The post-war peak in marriages in the Netherlands was reached in 1952 with over 90,000 marriages performed in that year. After that year, the number of marriages went down and then back up to 92,000 in the year 1957. There was some yearly fluctuations but the number of marriages did not top 100,000 until 1965; it then rose to 122,000 during 1970-72 but it began to decline reaching approximately 107,000 marriages per year in 1973.

Turning to the marriage rate, the rate of marriage today is 8 per thousand population, the same as it was in 1950. However, the rate did get down to 7 and up to about 9. Basically, however, the marriage rate in the Netherlands has exhibited a fairly regular picture.

Sweden

In Sweden there were 54,000 marriages in 1952 and the number stayed roughly the same through 1961. For most of these years, the number of marriages hovered around the 50,000 mark. The number began to build up, however, and got to over 60,000 by 1967. Since 1967 there has been a remarkable decline in the number of marriages per year. We are talking about a decrease on the order of 7 to 10 percent each and every year from 1967 to 1972. The number of marriages recently has been roughly 40,000 per year.

For 17 years since 1950, the rate of marriage was almost identical from one year to another, standing of 7 per thousand of population. Thereafter the rate began to decline, first to 6, then to 5, and then to 4 per thousand population. This is one of the lowest crude marriage rates found among the selected countries and certainly bears investigation. Trost has noted that there has been an increase in the number of unmarried cohabiting couples.3/

He cites data to show that in 1970 of all the married and unmarried cohabiting couples, approximately 7 percent were unmarried. By 1973 the percentage of unmarried rose to about 10 percent of the total of all couples. Clearly it is necessary to take into account the number of couples who live together but chose not to marry. In a very real and quantitative sense they are competing with marriage. On the other hand, either their numbers are much larger than Trost has indicated or there must be some additional explanation for the decrease in marriages. That is to say, the number of marriages was going down at the rate 7 to 10 percent per year. Either the number of couples cohabiting without marrying must be going up at a similar rate or there must be some other explanation for the decline in marriages. But between 1965 and 1970 there was almost 28 percent loss in the number of marriages and a 29 percent drop in the marriage rate. The number of marriages in 1973 constituted somewhat less than two-thirds of the number of marriages there were in 1966. This is a great drop in less than a decade and if it is all due to the increase in couples living together without marriages it suggests a significant rise in this phenomenon.

United States

The United States started the second half of the century with almost 1,700,000 marriages per year and a marriage rate of 11 per thousand population. The number of marriages went down until 1959 and then started to build up again, reaching the 2 million mark in 1968. By 1974 there were over 2,300,000 marriages. The marriage rate showed a similar decline, and then an increase, as did the sheer numbers. By 1974, it was almost back up to the 1950 level of 11 per thousand.

Divorce

Understandably, societies are concerned with that form of marriage disruption included in divorce or formal separation. The divorce records tell us many things about individuals and societies. From an individuals' standpoint, they indicate the number of times that people have sought the good life through marriage only to find that it was not what they expected. Divorce is thus an index of some kind of human discomfort, unhappiness, or dissatisfaction. From a societal standpoint, the number of divorces is an important indication of the different kinds of services that may be needed and has definite social and economic implications. For example, a high divorce rate would seem to imply that greater emphasis could or should be given to family life education, and/or to marriage counseling. Since many divorces involve children, a high divorce rate also means that societies must come to grips with the potential trauma of divorce for children. It is relevant to note that children in intact homes also have traumas and unmet needs but this does not detract from the needs of children who parents divorce. It is likely, however, that an unwitting by-product of a high divorce rate is the reduction of the stigma ascribed to children of divorce. As more and more children witness the divorce of their parents, each is less likely to have the feeling that he or she has inexplicably been dealt a cruel and unique blow. Still, we should not be callous to the particular needs of children of divorce. Societies need to recognize, too, that a high divorce rate means that there will be an increase in the housing, economic, and other problems peculiar to one-parent families. Ultimately, the bulk of these solo parents will remarry, but they will be replaced by a new and possibly larger group of parents and children in the same situation.

These are still other social consequences of divorce. Divorce frequently means that the woman if she were not already in the labor force will seek to enter it, suggesting a need for more jobs. And, of course, the divorce rate affects the marriage rate since most divorced people eventually will remarry. No one, presumably, wants a high divorce rate. Yet, as we shall see, a high divorce rate seems to be a mark of the non-socialist world. Let us have a look at the data for the various countries and attempt first to discover what is going on, that is, what kinds of divorce numbers and rates we are speaking about and what kind of changes we have had.

Japan

In 1950, there were about 83,700 divorces in Japan. The numbers went down fairly steadily, reaching a low of a little over 69,000 in 1961. As shown in the graph the number of divorces has risen markedly since 1965. Since 1971 there have been slightly over 100,000 divorces per year in Japan. The crude divorce rate exhibits the same basic trend. Starting with a rate of 1.0 per thousand in 1950 we note a decline. For several years from 1959 to 1965 the rate stood at .7. Thereafter it built up and is now at 1.0 again.

West Germany

West Germany saw 74,600 divorces in 1950. In the middle to late 1950s a low of about 40,000 divorces per year was reached. The number began to build up in the mid 1960s and now stands at a little over 90,000 per year. The crude divorce rate went down from 1.5 in the base year to .8 and is now back up to 1.4.

Netherlands

In the Netherlands there were almost 6,500 divorces in 1950. In a few years this was to drop by a thousand and for about a decade divorces numbered a little below or a little above 5,500 per year. The rise which started in the mid 1960s reached about 18,000 by 1974. The crude divorce rate behaved in a similar fashion dropping from .6 in 1950 to .4 for the years 1957 to 1963. The rise which began in the mid 1960s has now reached 1.3 divorces per thousand population.

Sweden

For almost a decade and a half since 1950, the number of divorces in Sweden ranged from 8,000 to about 9,000 per year. The numbers began to rise in the mid 1960s and now stand at over 16,000 per year. For twelve of the fourteen years beginning in 1950 the crude divorce rate was 1.1. In 1964 the rate started upward, slowly at first and then more rapidly. It now stands at 2.0.

United States

The United States started the second half of the century with fewer than 390,000 divorces. The numbers stayed below 400,000 until 1960 when they started to creep upward. The mid 1960s saw a sharper rise and ten years later there were about a million divorces per year. The crude divorce rate was 2.6 in 1950 and got down as low as 2.1. In 1965 it was back up to 2.5. In the last ten years the increase has been more pronounced and it is now 4.4, the highest divorce rate discovered.

There are some fascinating differences and regularities that can be gleaned from this cross-national comparison of divorce. Clearly the countries differ with regard to the magnitude of the divorce phenomenon. In 1950, the

crude divorce rate was over four times higher in the United States than it was in the country in which it was lowest, that is, the Netherlands. In 1974, the divorce rate in the United States was four times higher than in Japan, the country which in that year was lowest. Recently, the rate in the United States has been double that of Sweden, and the rate in Sweden has been double that in Japan.

Interestingly, in three countries the divorce rate is higher now than it was in 1950, in one, West Germany, it is about the same and in the final country, Japan, it is lower than it was in 1950. In the three countries where the divorce rate is above the 1950 high, the percentage increase was greatest in Sweden, followed by the Netherlands and the United States in that order.

Four out of five of the countries reached a low in their divorce rates during the same short period of time, from the middle to late 1950s. The exception was Sweden where the divorce curve was relatively flat for fourteen years.

In all five countries, the divorce rate and the number of divorces began to increase fairly rapidly either in 1964 or 1965. This stands out clearly in the computer-generated graphs. While it is individual couples who determine that their marriage is no longer meaningful and that they should seek a divorce, the regularity with which couples increasingly reached this decision is almost startling. Despite differences among the countries in such factors as religion, age at marriage, per capita gross national product, proportion of women employed outside the home, all responded similarly in 1965 with an upturn in divorce and a continuing increase in it. It is as if couples in the different and differing countries were responding to a silent, international cue. In no other five-year period since 1950 was the increase in

divorce as large as it was in the period 1965 to 1970, and this was true in all of the countries. What is more, the rates of increase were similar. In the Netherlands and the United States the divorce rate went up 40 percent between 1965 and 1970, in the Federal Republic of Germany and in Sweden it increased 33 percent, while in Japan it went up almost 27 percent during this period of rapid growth.

Since 1970, the divorce rate has remained high in all of the countries studied. It shows signs of leveling off in Japan and West Germany but continues to rise in the Netherlands, Sweden and the United States. Obviously, the high rate of increase cannot continue indefinitely for the number of divorces has been going up faster the number of married persons age 45 and under, the age group most susceptible to divorce. As Glick has noted, a leveling off or decline in the divorce rate must come sometime.[3]

One of the most fascinating discoveries is that divorce rates and numbers began to increase substantially in 1965. Another is the disregularity with regard to marriage patterns in the various countries. How do we account for these phenomena?

Clearly the birth rate affects the numbers about which we have been talking, that is, the number of people who will marry and divorce. If a black snake swallows an egg, you can notice the bulge in its body first up around its neck and then further and further down its body. In a similar way, a baby boom, or a bulge in the birth rate, impacts first on one segment of society after another. Initially, it affects the demand for maternal and infant health care and various other services and goods. A bulge in grade school enrollments is next noticed, followed by a bulge in high school and college enrollments and in people seeking work. Other things being equal, there

should be an increase in marriages some twenty to twenty-five years after the increase in births. Since so many divorces occur after but a few years of marriage, following the upsurge in marriages, again other things being equal, we should find a comparable increase in the number of divorces. But are other things equal? That is, can the change in the marriage and divorce pattern be accounted for primarily by the changing birth rates twenty to twenty-five years ago?

A few examples will indicate that at times there is not a great degree of concordance between the births at one time and the marriage twenty or twenty-five years later. In the Netherlands, births increased by 8 1/2 percent from 1935 to 1940. Twenty years later there was almost no increase at all in the number of marriages over the previous five years period. And from 1960 to 1965, twenty-five years from 1940, there was a 22 percent increase in the number of marriages which is well above the 8 1/2 percent prior increase in births. In the United States, there was a 9 1/2 percent increase in births from 1935 to 1940; from 1955 to 1960, however,there was a 1 1/2 percent decline in marriages and from 1960 to 1965 marriages were up over 17 percent. In Japan births showed a 3 percent decline from 1935 to 1940 but twenty years later marriages were up 10 percent for a five year period. Twenty-five years from 1940 marriages were also up, this time by almost 9 percent. Finally, twenty-five years after Sweden saw an 11 1/2 percent increase in births there was a 28 percent <u>decrease</u> in marriages. Nineteen forty-five was a high point in Swedish births but for almost all the years from 1965 on there was a fairly sizeable decrease in marriages over each prior year.

There are, of course, a number of reasons why birth curves and marriage

curves do not agree better than they do. People do not all marry at the same age, the societal norm for age at marriage can go up or down, marriages can be postponed or forfeited, and remarriages following divorce increasingly may have to be taken into account. Knowing the births in a given year, school enrollments six or seven years later can be predicted with reasonable precision and the right number of school desks can be made available. Just knowing the number of births, it is much more difficult to predict the number of homes and apartments and other goods and services that newly married couples will need at some specified year in the future.

Marriage and Divorce Curves

Theoretically, the divorces of the people marrying today could be evenly distributed over the next fifty years. In actuality, of course, divorces are much likely to occur in the early years of marriage. In the United States, for example, about half of all divorces are granted to couples who have been married less than six years. This being the case, we should expect to find a noticeable relationship between the number of marriages during a given period and the number of divorces five to ten years later. Let us look at the pattern in the selected countries.

In Japan, marriages started to increase about 1956 and reached a plateau in 1964 which remained until 1969. Divorces started to rise about 1965 which is farily consistent with the rise in marriages. However, there is no six-year plateau in divorce. On the contrary, the number of divorces have continued to increase steadily.

West Germany exhibits an even more curious picture. Marriages started climbing in 1955 , rose to 1961, and have been declining ever since. Divorces

started to rise nine years after the increase in marriages, that is, in 1964. The divorce rate has continued to increase, however. The decline in marriages, in other words, is not reflected in a five to ten year later decline in divorces.

In the Netherlands, marriages started to increase in 1963, noticeably so in 1964. They reached a peak in 1970 and then declined. Divorces started to rise about the same time as did marriages, in 1964. The increase in divorces thus could not be due simply to the increase in marriages. Like in other countries, divorces in the Netherlands have continued to increase.

Sweden, too,presents a picture of lack of concordance between the number of marriages and the five to ten-year later number of divorces. Marriages declined from 1950 to 1960 but during this decade the divorce curve was essentially flat. Five years after the lowest point in marriages, divorces began to increase rather than to decrease. From its low in 1960, marriages rose to a high in 1966 and have been declining ever since. But in the eight years since the decline in marriages divorces have continued to rise.

In the United States, finally, a rise in marriages started in 1963 and continued for ten years. The divorce rate started to go up in 1964, obviously too soon after the increase in marriages to be accounted for only by that increase. Both marriages and divorces increased for a number of years but not at the same rate. From 1960 to 1965, for example, marriages increased ten percent; in the five years later period, 1965 to 1970, divorces increased almost twenty-six percent.

Let us try to summarize the results of the comparisons of marriage and divorce curves:

1. In general, there was no strong relationship between the number of marriages during a given period and the number of divorces five to ten years later.
2. The relationship between the number of marriages and number of divorces differed in the various countries and at different times. An increase in divorce followed by five to ten years both a decrease in marriages and a stable marriage pattern or divorces and marriages increased at about the same time.
3. Regardless of their marriage patterns, in all of the societies divorces began to increase in the same period,1964 to 1965.

Age at Marriage

Earlier we referred to the social significance of youthful age at marriage, particularly its effects on fertility and the likelihood of divorce. What, then, do the data show about the trends in age at marriage in the selected countries? For simplicity, we will restrict the discussion to brides and will deal chiefly with the age categories less than 19 years, 20-24 years, and 25-29 years of age.

Japan

In Japan, in 1950, in almost 15 percent of all marriages the bride was 19 years of age or younger. By 1973, this had dropped to about four and a half percent. The decrease in the proportion of very young brides did not result in a corresponding increase of the proportion of brides in the next higher age category, age 20 to 24. The percentage of brides aged 20-24 increased only from about 59 percent in 1950 to 62 percent in 1973. The noteworthy

increase was in the proportion of brides aged 25-29 which increased from 18 percent in 1950 to 27 percent in 1973. Thus over 70 percent of the loss in the proportion of brides aged 19 and younger is reflected in the increase of brides aged 25 to 29. It is not just that very youthful marriage has drastically declined in Japan but also that there has in a marked tendency for women to marry after age 25.

West Germany

The pattern for age at marriage in the Federal Republic of Germany is quite different from that in Japan. West Germany has gone from a relatively low rate of brides aged 19 and younger, about 8.4 percent, to the relatively high rate of over 25 percent. In the period 1950 to 1959, the rate of very young brides more than doubled and by 1973 had increased another 50 percent. The period 1950 to 1973 also showed an increase in the proportion of brides aged 20-24 which went from 38 percent ot 48 percent of all brides. Correspondingly, there was a pronounced decline in the percentage of brides aged 25 to 29 and a more modest decline in the proportion of brides 30 years of age and older.

Netherlands

Turning to the Netherlands, we also note an increase in youthful marriage but not as pronounced as in West Germany nor is the current rate as high. Brides aged 19 and younger constituted 8 percent of all marriages in 1950 and 19 percent of all marriages in 1973. A more pronounced increase occurred in the next age category, ages 20 to 24. Here we find that the 1950 percentage of 51 percent increased steadily to over 62 percent and now, down slightly, stands at 60 percent. The biggest decrease is found in the proportion of all

marriages in which the bride is 25 years of age and older. The 25-30 age group dropped from 31 to 13 percent of all marriages while the over 30 age group declined from almost 21 percent to 8 percent.

Sweden

Sweden shows a different pattern in age at marriage than either Japan or West Germany. The proportion of brides aged 19 and younger in Sweden built up from 12 percent in 1950 to 20 percent in 1962. It then declined, gradually at first but since 1968 more rapidly. In 1973, only 7 percent of all brides were 19 years of age or younger. The pattern for brides aged 20-24 is similar. It, too, built up and then declined, going from 41 percent in 1950 to 57 percent in 1964 and then down to 48 percent in 1973. Correspondingly, the proportion of older brides went down to accompany the increase in younger ones and then back up again. In 1973, 26 percent of all brides were aged 25 to 29, just a little higher proportion than was true in 1950. Sweden apparently flirted with youthful marriage for about a decade but it did not last as a national pattern.

United States

For some time the United States has been noted for its youthful marriages. While the rates are higher it is interesting that the changes in youthful marriage have been similar to those in Sweden. The proportion of brides age 19 and under built up from 32 percent in 1950 to 38 percent in 1962, the year of the peak in very young marriages in Sweden. In the United States, the proportion has decreased to less than 33 percent. Brides in the next higher age category, 20-24 years of age, increased, with some fluctuation, from 35 to 40 percent by 1969 and then started declining. They now constitute

less than 38 percent of all brides. The proportion of brides aged 25-29 went down from 1950 to 1963, correlative with the increase in younger brides, and then went back up. Such brides now make up over 10 percent of all marriages, less than in 1950.

It is clear that youthful marriage varies considerably from country to country. The United States leads in the proportion of brides aged 19 and under with 33 percent, followed by West Germany, 25 percent, the Netherlands 19 percent, Sweden 7 percent and Japan 3.5 percent. This rank order of youthful marriages is not maintained for divorces, except for the extremes. That is, Japan with the lowest rate of teenage marriage has the lowest divorce rate while the United States with the highest rate of such marriages has the highest divorce rate. Sweden, however, has next to the lowest rate of teenage marriages but next to the highest rate of divorce. If we go back to 1962, when both Sweden and the United States experienced a peak in youthful marriages, we find that this was followed in a few years by an increase in divorce. Yet in the mid 1960s all of the countries studied showed an increase in divorce even Japan which has a steady decrease in teenage marriage. While there is no evidence to dispute the accepted relationship between early age at marriage and divorce, it does appear that other variables also must be taken into account. Sweden has demonstrated, for example, that it is possible to have one of the lowest rates of teenage marriage but a high divorce rate while in the Netherlands the rate of teenage marriage is fairly high but its divorce fairly low. As a category, youthful marriages very likely are more prone to divorce than are other marriages. The major point, however, is simply that the steady increase in divorce exhibited in the various countries cannot be attributed solely to increase in youthful marriages.

The reasons for the country-to-country variation in age at marriage and the recent changes in this pattern are not readily apparent. Perhaps the best that can be done is to suggest some of the factors that should be investigated in an effort to explain these phenomena. First, of course, would be the matter of tradition or of societal norms favoring youthful marriages. Societal definitions of the proper age for marriage obviously differ and such definitions tend to change slowly. But they do change, as we have seen, and, what is more, simply stating that age at marriage is governed by societal norms does not elucidate how the differing norms developed in the various countries or why they are maintained.

One should also investigate the alternatives to early marriage, specifically the opportunities for continuing to pursue education beyond age 18 and for employment. It would be particularly important to look at the employment opportunities for women and attempt to determine the effects of working outside the home or age at marriage and marriage generally. Logically, job opportunities for women make it economically feasible for young people to marry and thus could encourage youthful marriage. On the other hand, working women are exposed to an alternative to marriage which could result in postposement of marriage or even the forfeiting of it entirely.

Cohabitation without marriage is an alternative to youthfulmarriage. Apparently, this is more prevalent in some societies, such as Sweden and the United States, than it is in others. Why this difference among countries?

The whole area of the feasibility of early marriage should be investigated. Housing and employment immediately come to mind as does the opportunity to purchase the goods required to establish an independent household. Then one must consider the desirability of early marriage. What does

society teach in this regard? Why do some societies express a tolerant attitude toward youthful marriage and thus tacitly encourage it?

The Reproductive Function of the Family

We will not go into great detail concerning the trends in births and fertility for demographers have given considerable attention to these phenomena. It is nevertheless desirable to take a quick look at the changes in the number of births and the crude birth rates in the selected countries.

Japan

In 1950, there were over 2,300,000 births in Japan and the crude birth rate stood at 28.2. Seven years later there were but a million and a half births and the crude birth rate was down to 17.3. This was a 39 percent drop in the birth rate. Basically, as can be noted from the graph, the birth rate has been lev el since 1957. But there was a slight increase in 1967. Recently there have been slightly more than 2 million births per year and the crude birth rate stands at 19.4. The combination of birth and death rates gives Japan a population doubling time of 53 years.

West Germany

The birth rate in West Germany was fairly steady for the years 1950 to 1956, hovering around 16. Thereafter it began to rise a little, reaching a peak of 18.5 in 1964. It then began to decline and for the last five years has dropped precipitiously to the low of 10.2. At no time in this century has the birth rate been so low. There were almost three quarters of a million births in 1950 and from 1961 to 1967 just under or just over a million. Now there are about 630,000 births per year. If the birth and death rates remain

constant, it would be about 230 years before the population of West Germany would double.

Netherlands

In the Netherlands the crude birth rate was 22.7 in 1950. It stayed at this level for a few years and then dropped to about 21 where it remained until 1964. Since that date it has gone steadily and now stands at 14.5. The crude birth rate is 39 percent lower than it was in 1950. The number of births, almost 230,000 in 1950, built up to about 250,000 per year and for the past ten years has been falling. There are now less than 200,000 births per year.

Sweden

The birth rate and number of births have been somewhat erratic in Sweden but the magnitude of the changes have not been large. The graph for the crude birth rate covers but three points, from 16.4 in 1950 to 13.5 in 1974. The birth rate declined for a decade, reaching a low of 13.7 in 1960. It then rose and hovered around 16 from 1964 to 1967 and then again declined. The number of births have ranged from 115,000 in 1950 to a low of almost 103,000 in 1960, up to over 123,000 per year in 1966 and 1967 and down again to almost 11,000 in 1974.

United States

In 1950 the United States had a fairly high birth rate of 23.5 which built up to 25 by 1957. Thereafter it declined, at first rather modestly. The big decline started about 1966, when it was 16.5, and it has now gone down to 15. Similarly, the number of births built up to over 4 million in 1957

and then started to drop. However, [illegible] the fourteen years from 1952 to 1965 the number of births per year were just under or just over 4 million. In recent years there have been about 3 million births.

It is difficult, and perhaps unnecessary, to summarize this presentation. If we have alerted you to the changes in marriage and divorce patterns and some of the explanations for them, our purpose has been served, albeit not as fully as we would have liked to have done so.

REFERENCES

[1]United Nations, Demographic Yearbook, various issues.

[2]Jan Trost, "Married and Unmarried Cohabitation in Sweden" in Marie Corbin, ed., The Couple (in press).

[3]Paul C. Glick and Arthur J. Norton, "Perspectives on the Recent Upturn in Divorce and Remarriage," Demography (August, 1973), p.311.

[4]The Population of the Federal Republic of Germany (Wiesbaden, Federal Institute for Population Research).

APPENDIX

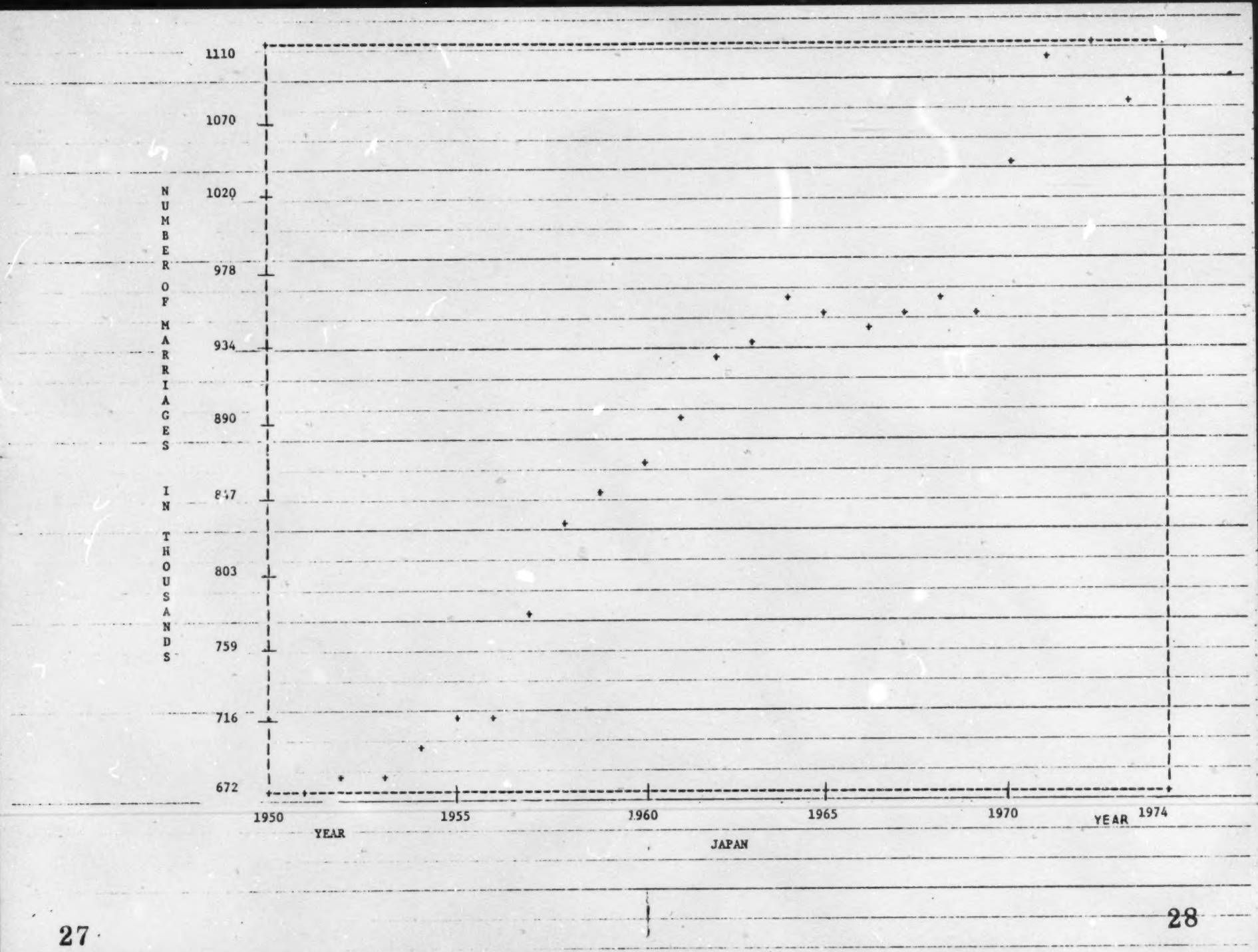
Computer-Generated Graphs--1950 to 1974

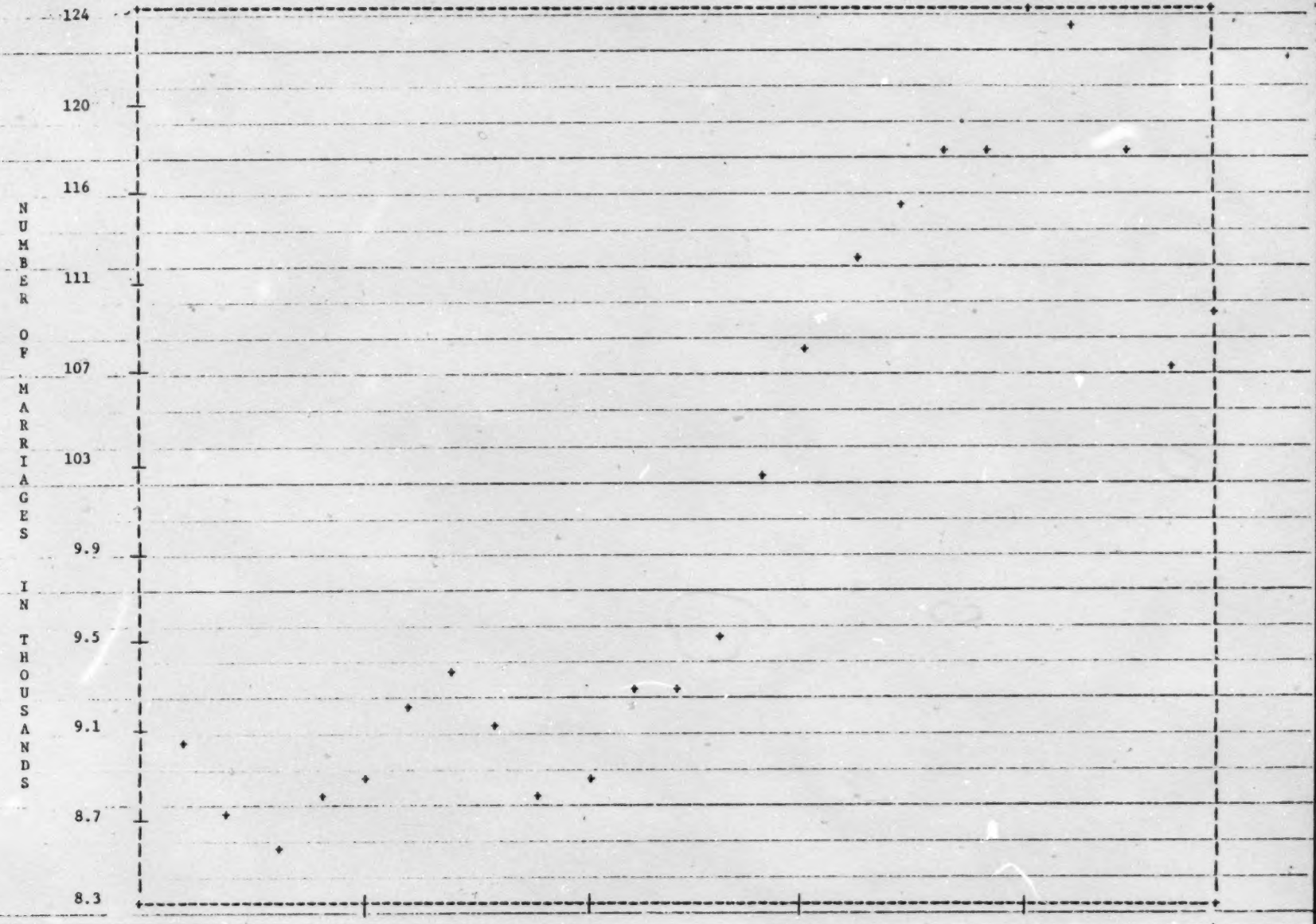
Number of Marriages in Thousands
- Japan
- Netherlands
- West Germany
- Sweden
- United States

Number of Divorces in Thousands
- Japan
- Netherlands
- West Germany
- Sweden
- United States

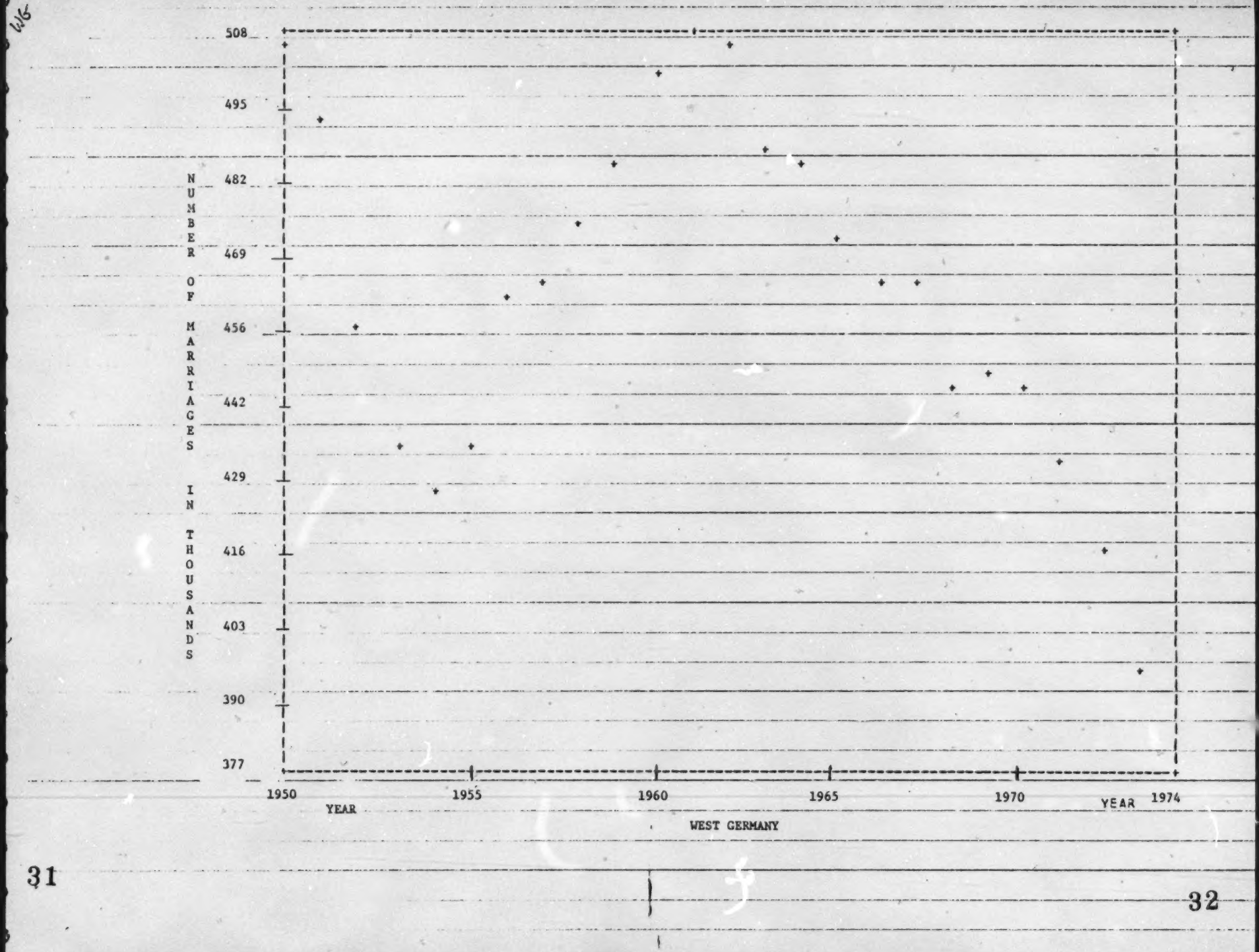
Number of Births in Thousands
- Japan
- Netherlands
- West Germany
- Sweden
- United States

Crudge Birth Rates
- Japan
- Netherlands
- West Germany
- Sweden
- United States

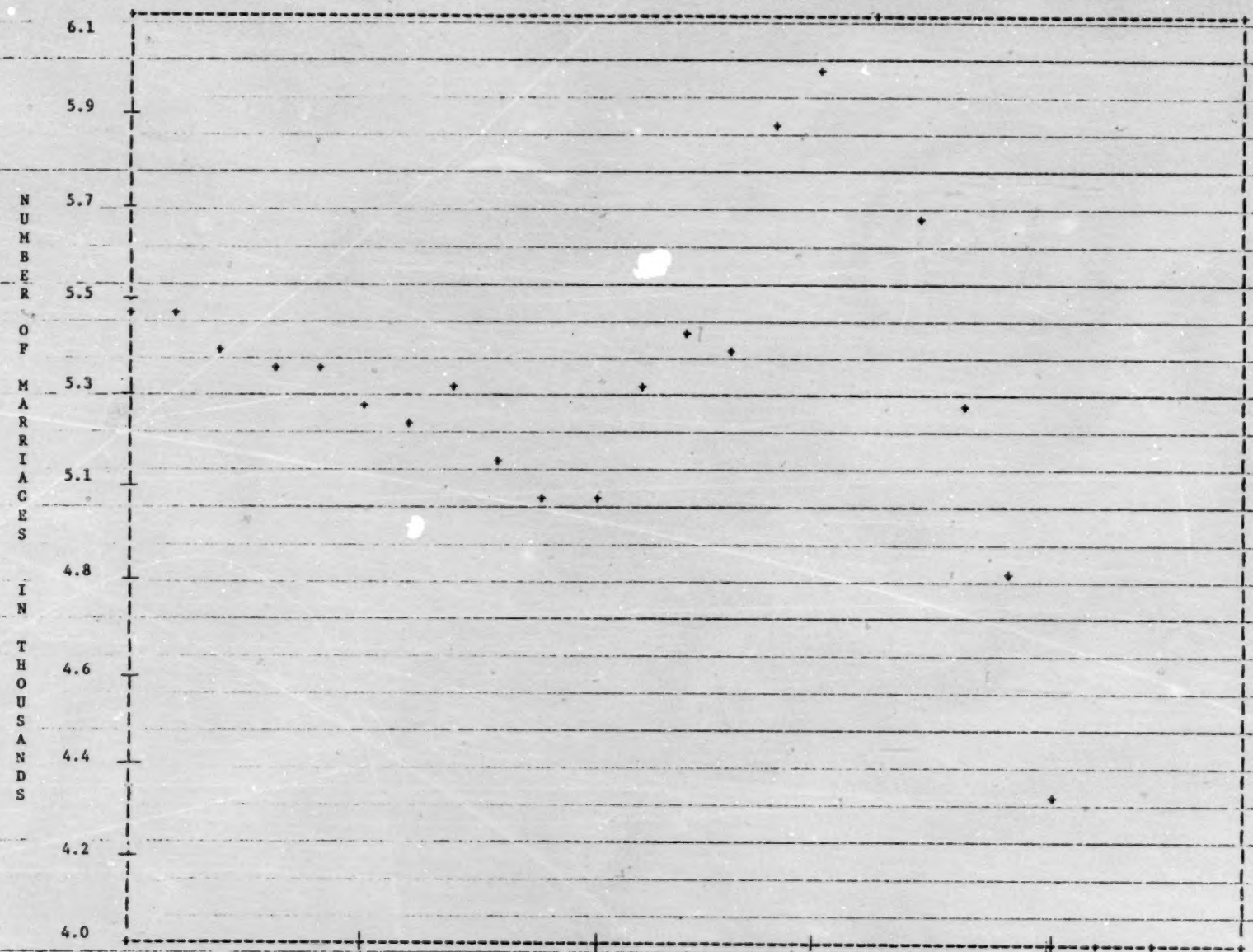

1110
1070
1020
978
934
890
847
803
759
716
672
NUMBER OF MARRIAGES IN THOUSANDS
1950
1955
1960
1965
1970
1974
YEAR
YEAR
JAPAN



THE NETHERLANDS

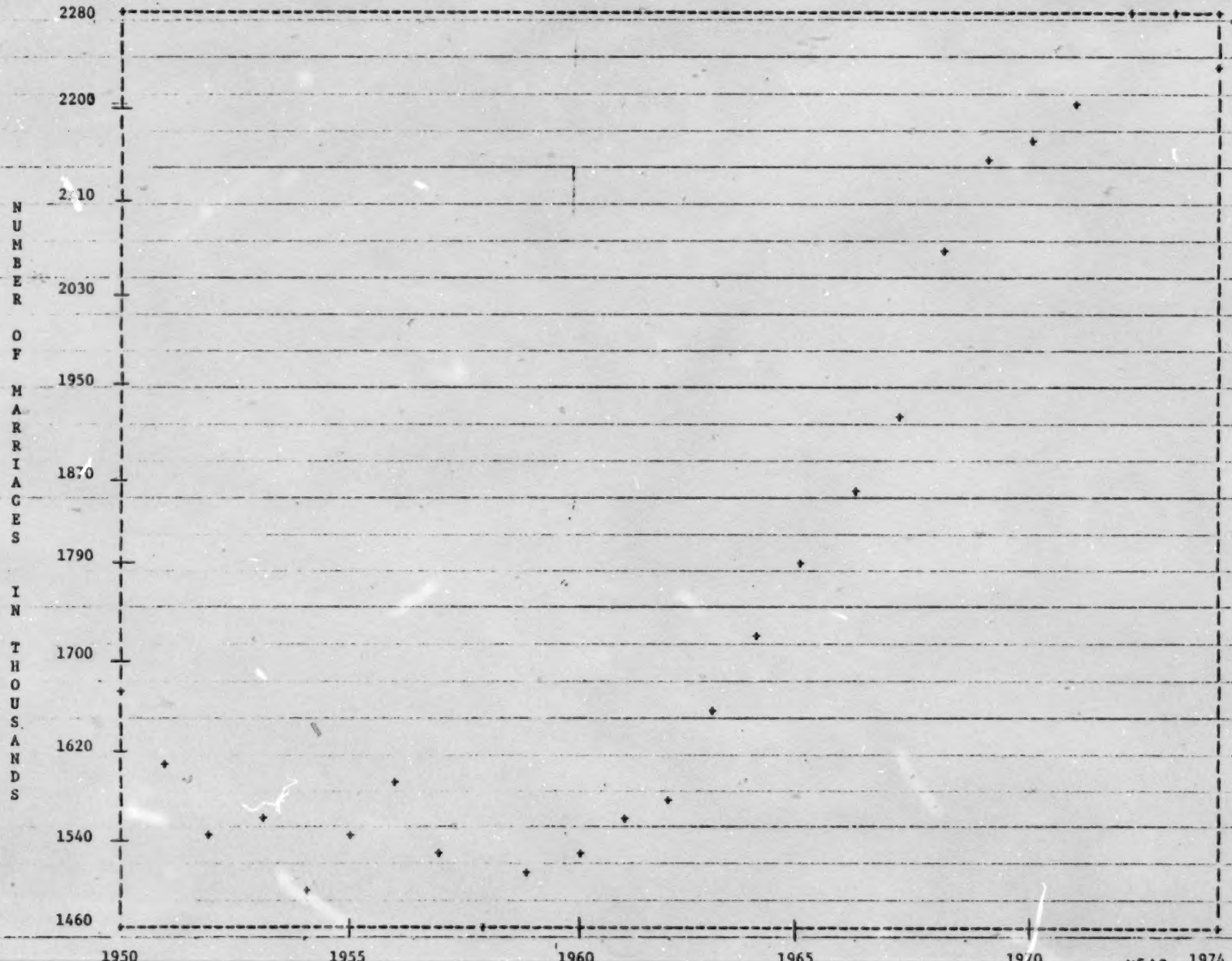

508
495
482
469
456
442
429
416
403
390
377
NUMBER OF MARRIAGES IN THOUSANDS
1950
1955
1960
1965
1970
1974
YEAR
YEAR
WEST GERMANY

S

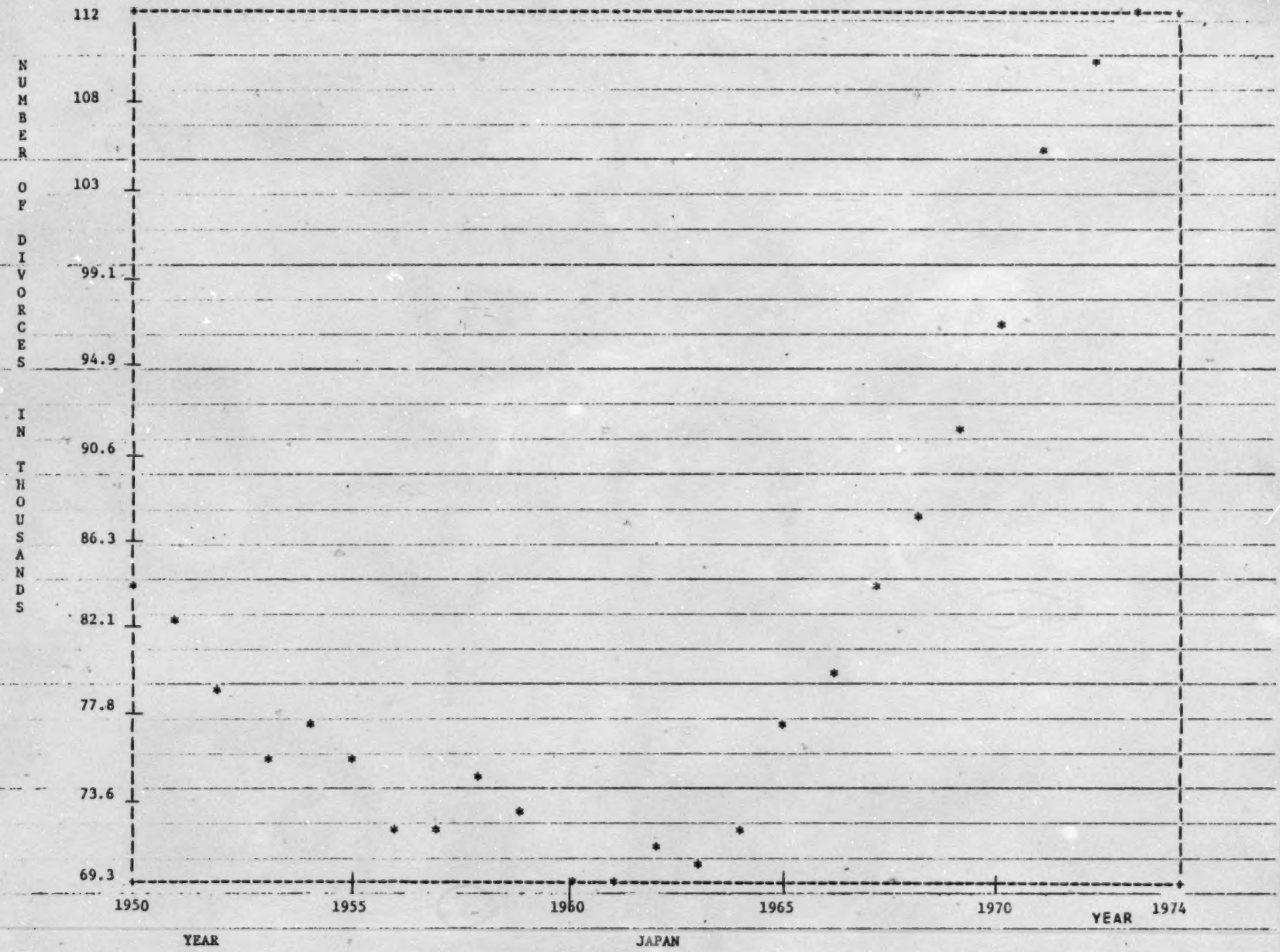

6.1
5.9
5.7
5.5
5.3
5.1
4.8
4.6
4.4
4.2
4.0
NUMBER OF MARRIAGES IN THOUSANDS
1950
1955
1960
1965
1970
1974
YEAR
SWEDEN

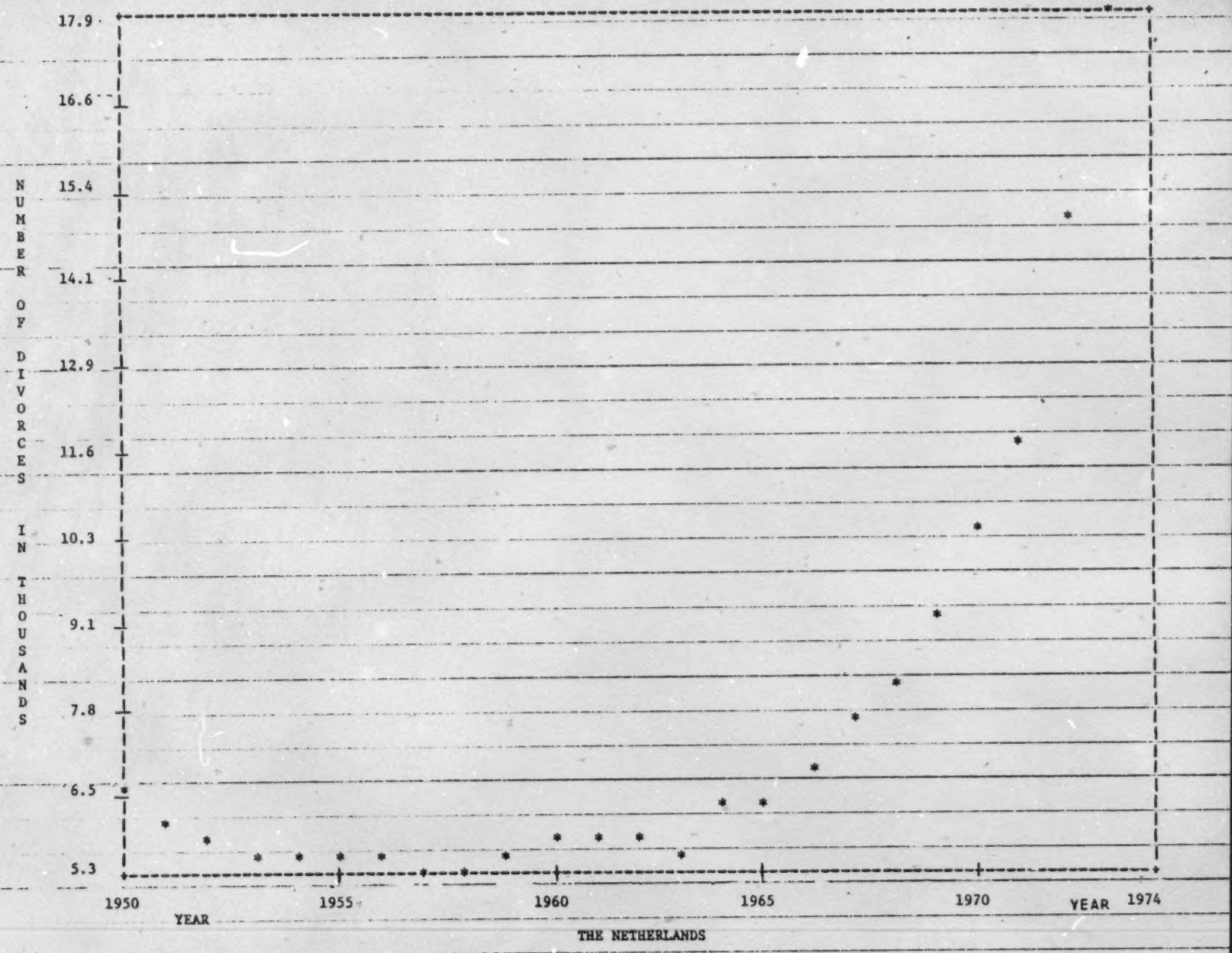
33

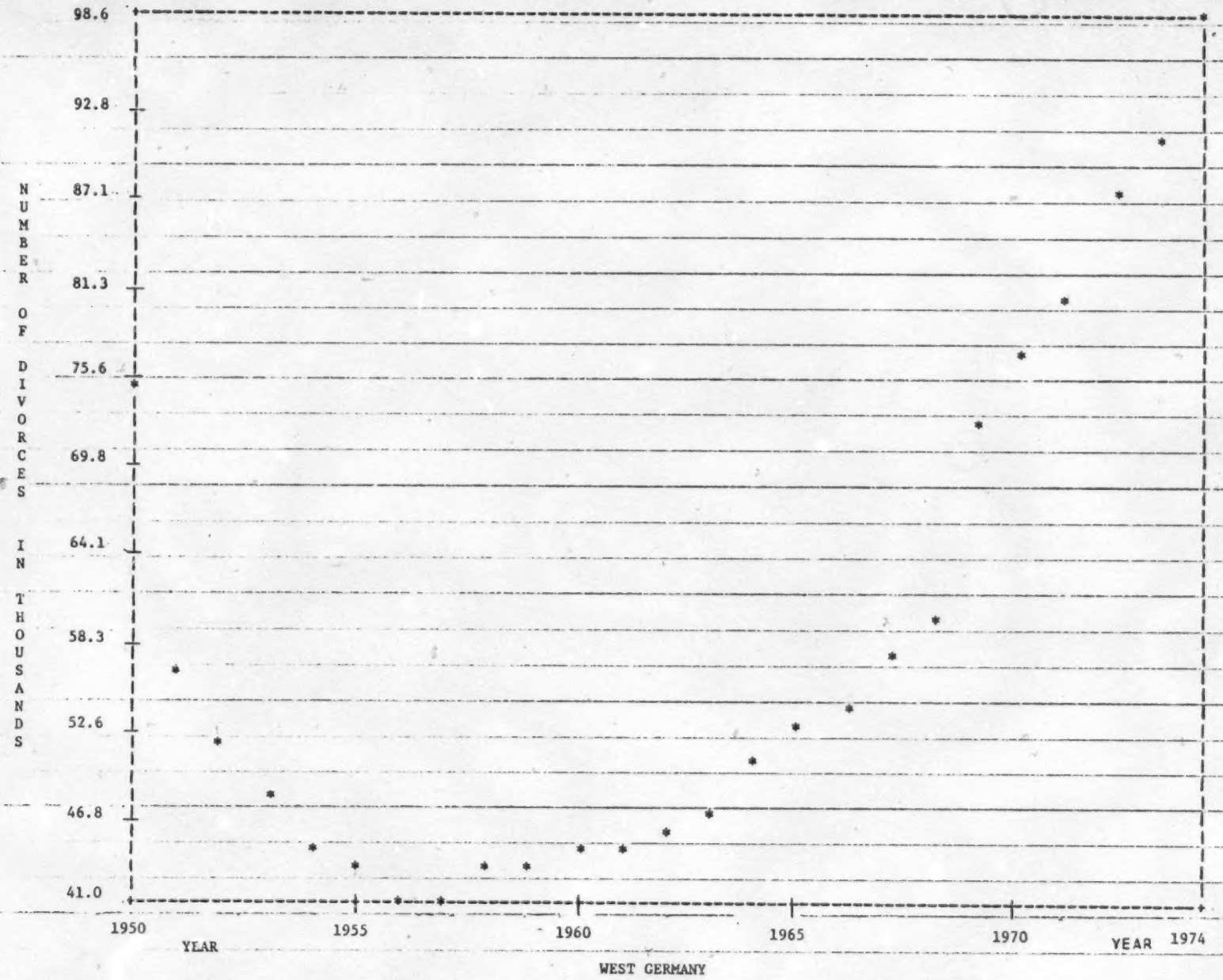
34



THE UNITED STATES

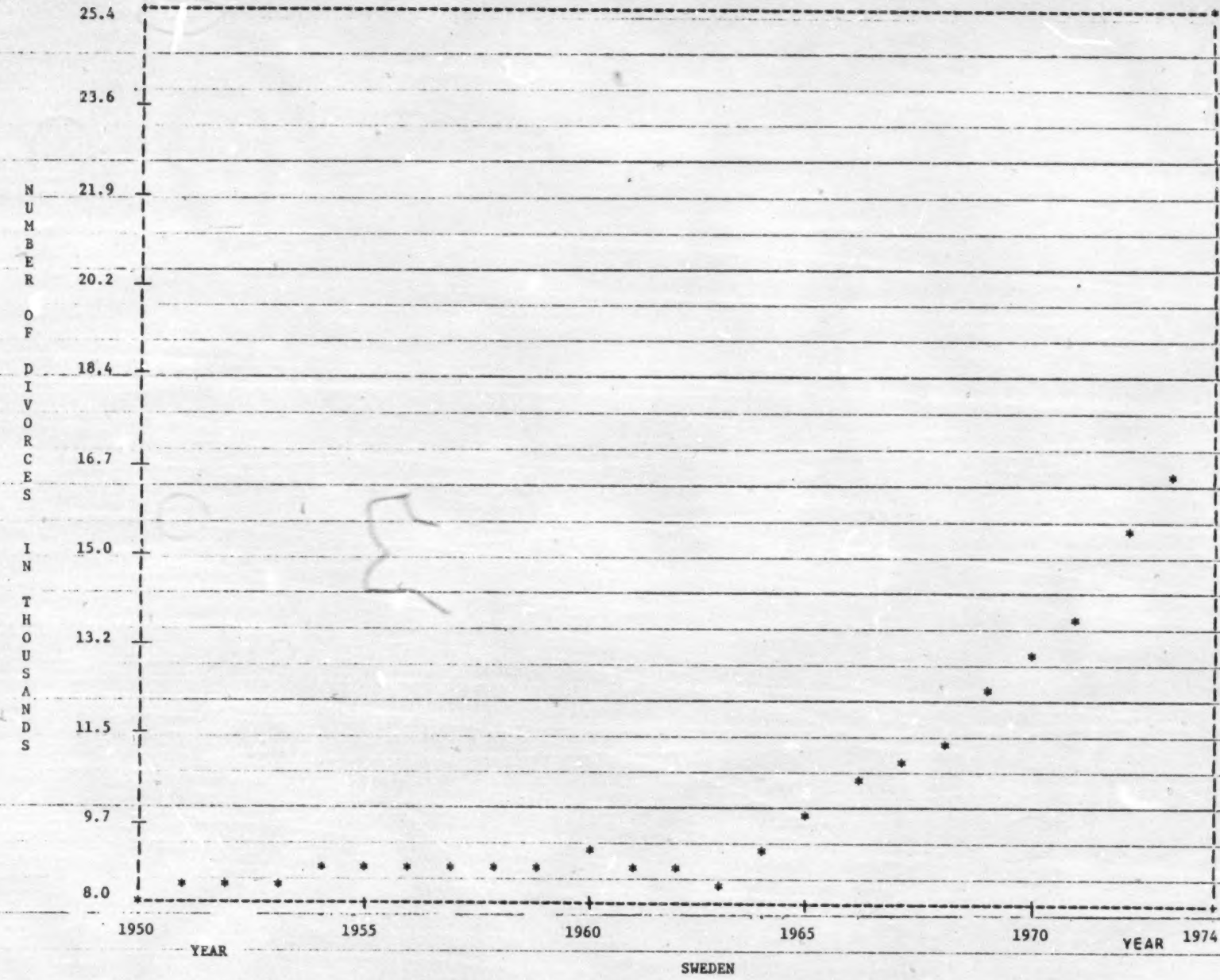

NUMBER OF DIVORCES IN THOUSANDS
112
108
103
99.1
94.9
90.6
86.3
82.1
77.8
73.6
69.3
1950
1955
1960
1965
1970
1974
YEAR
YEAR
JAPAN

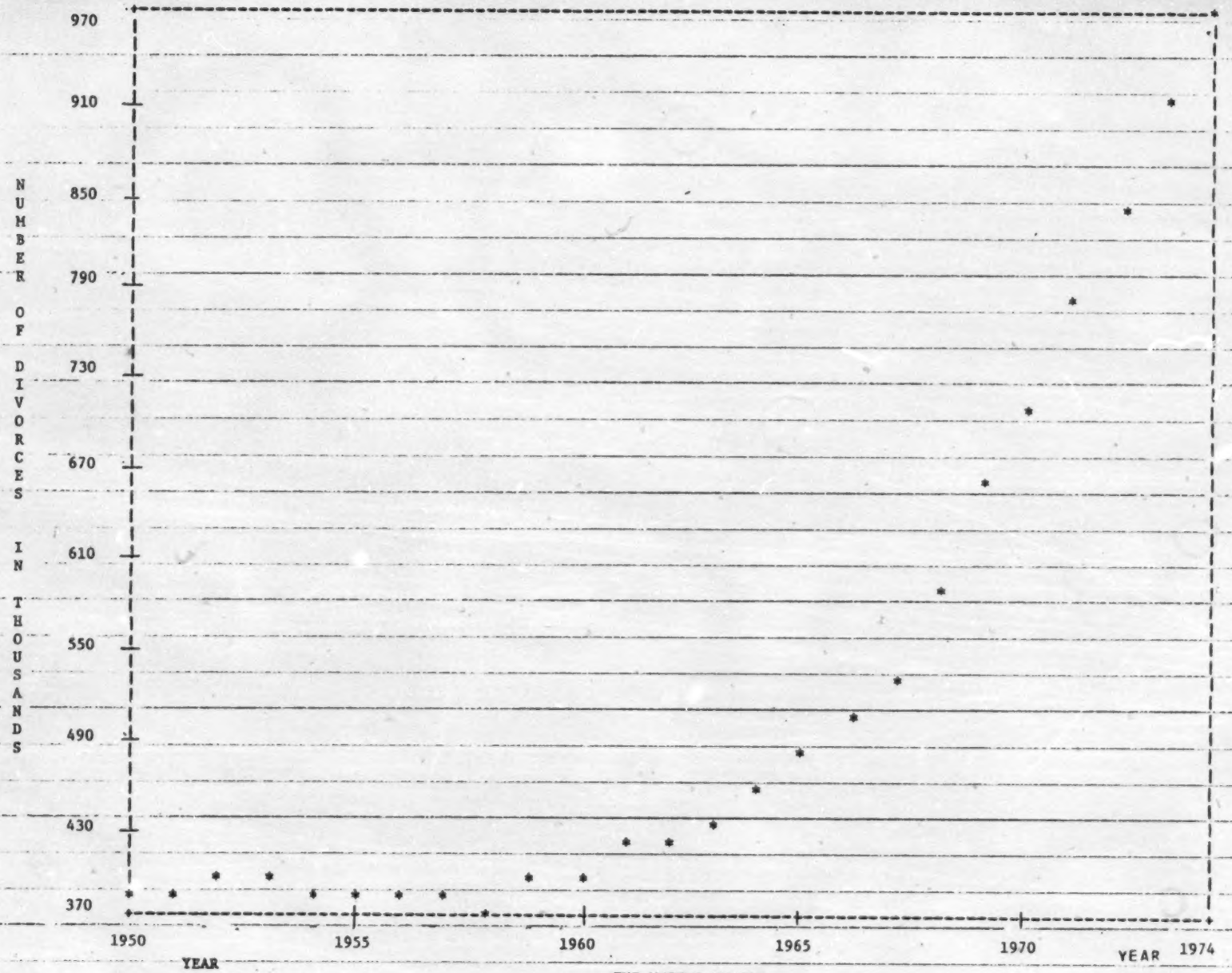

17.9
16.6
15.4
14.1
12.9
11.6
10.3
9.1
7.8
6.5
5.3
NUMBER OF DIVORCES IN THOUSANDS
1950
1955
1960
1965
1970
1974
YEAR
YEAR
THE NETHERLANDS


98.6
92.8
87.1
81.3
75.6
69.8
64.1
58.3
52.6
46.8
41.0
NUMBER OF DIVORCES IN THOUSANDS
1950
1955
1960
1965
1970
1974
YEAR
YEAR
WEST GERMANY

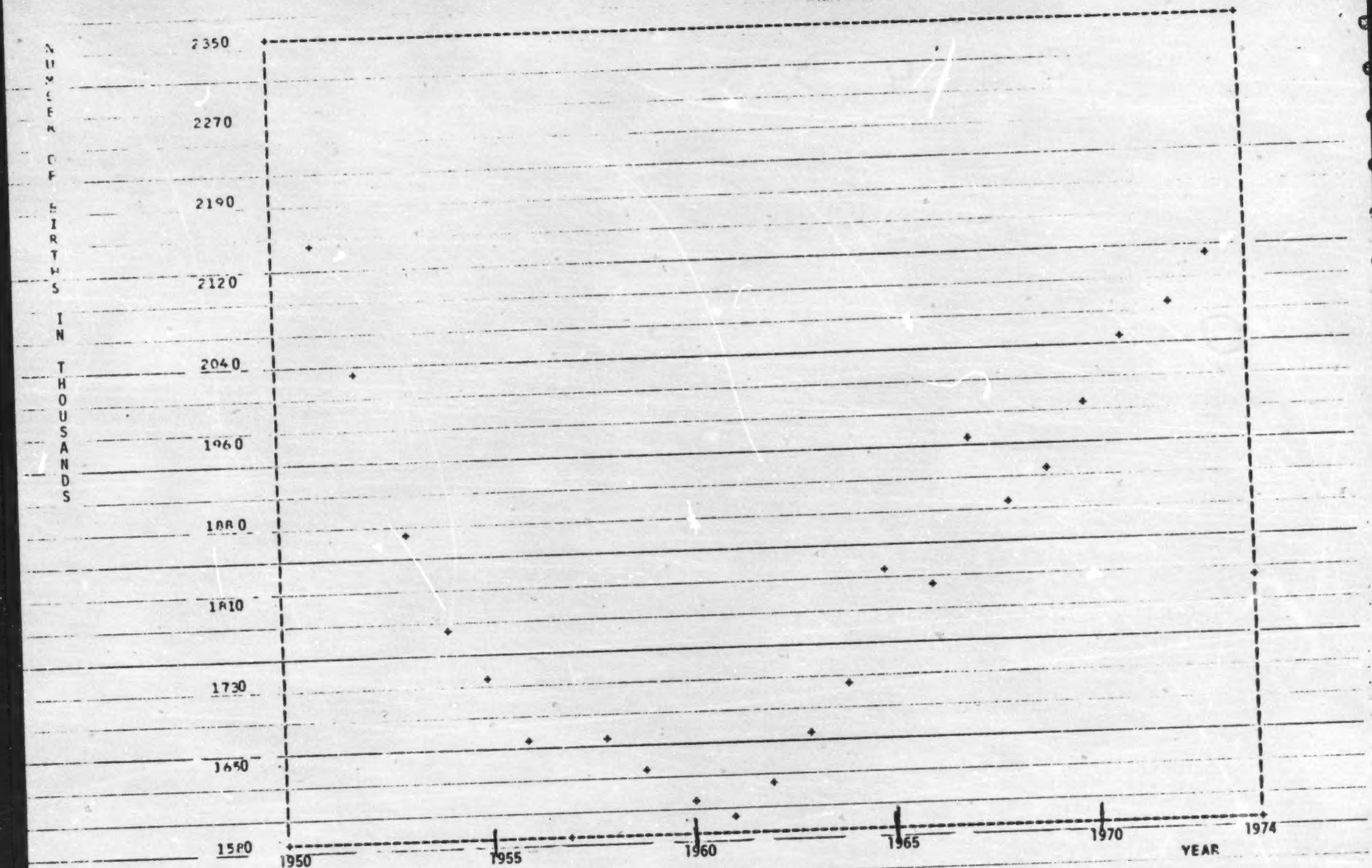
41

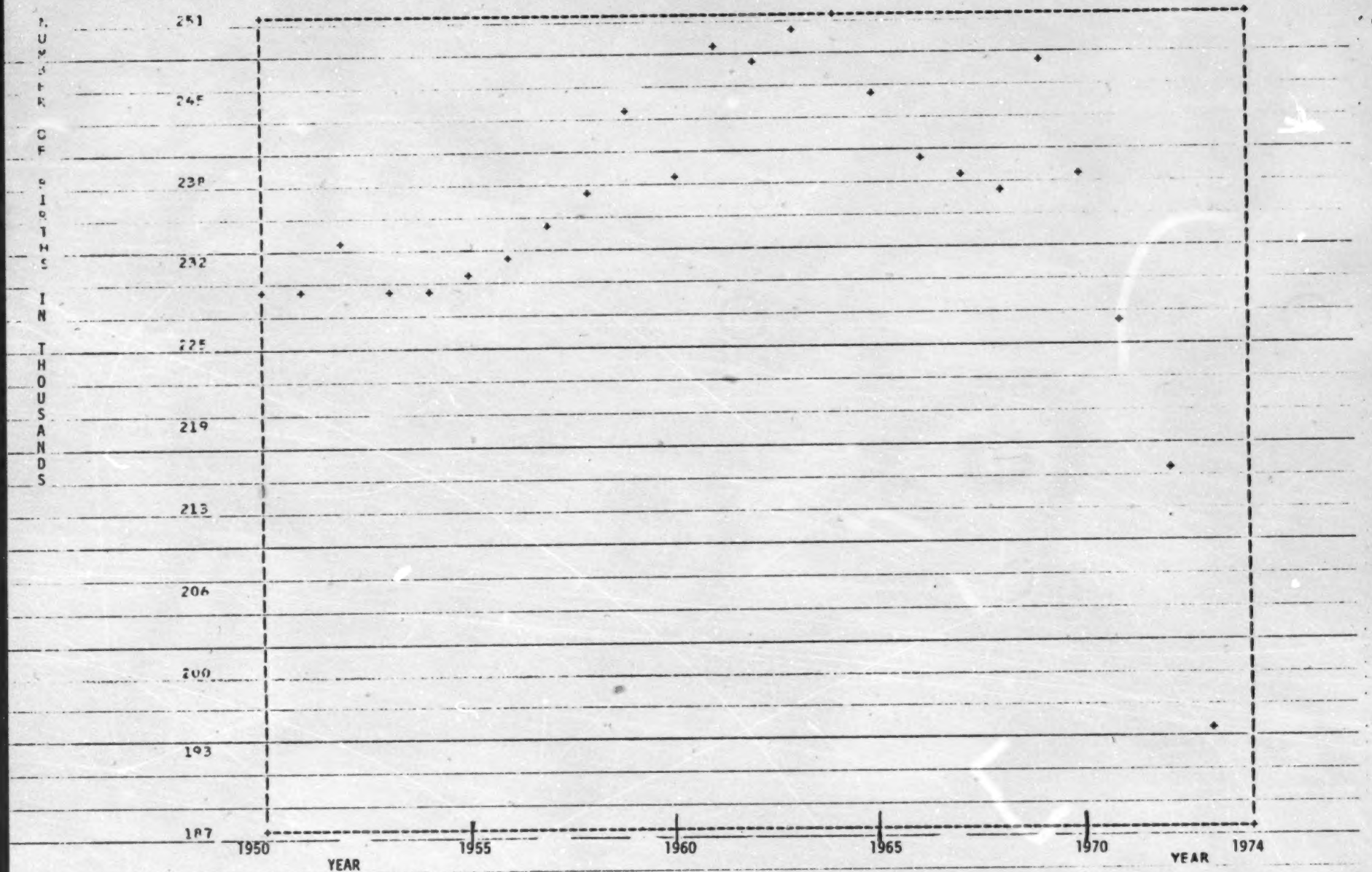
42


25.4
23.6
21.9
20.2
18.4
16.7
15.0
13.2
11.5
9.7
8.0
NUMBER OF DIVORCES IN THOUSANDS
1950
1955
1960
1965
1970
1974
YEAR
YEAR
SWEDEN

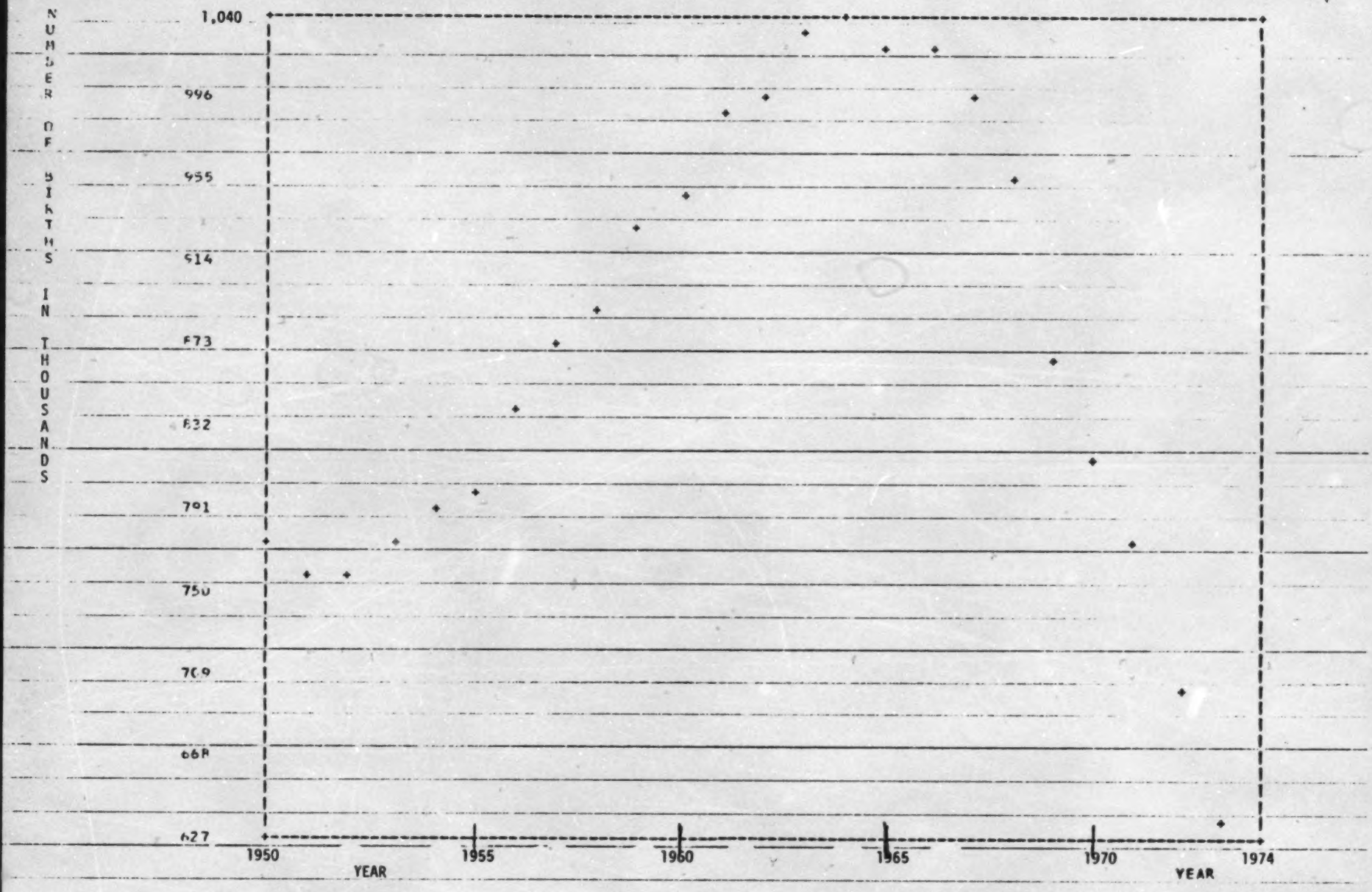


THE UNITED STATES

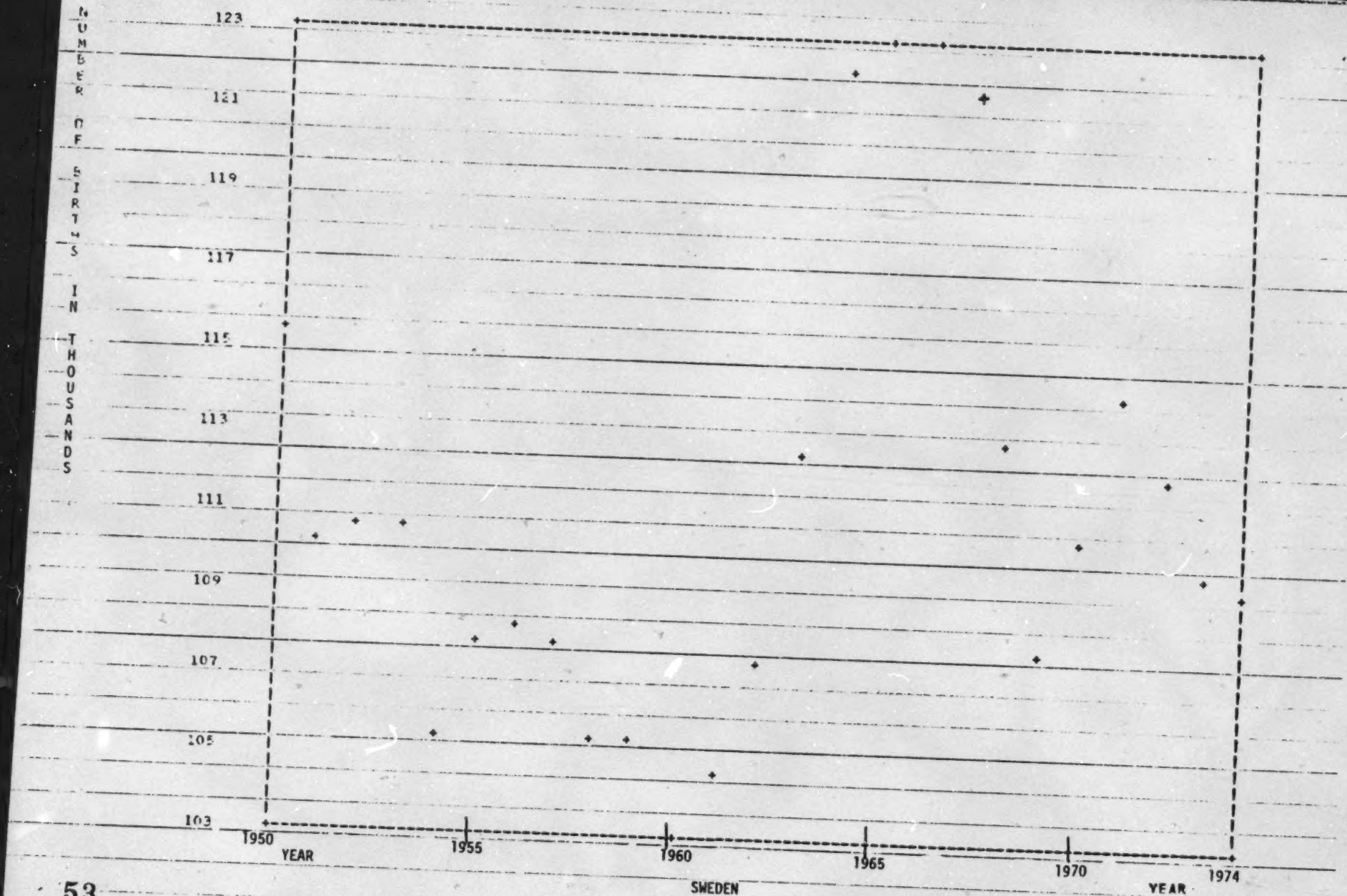

NUMBER OF BIRTHS IN THOUSANDS
2350
2270
2190
2120
2040
1960
1880
1810
1730
1650
1580
1950
1955
1960
1965
1970
1974
YEAR
YEAR
JAPAN

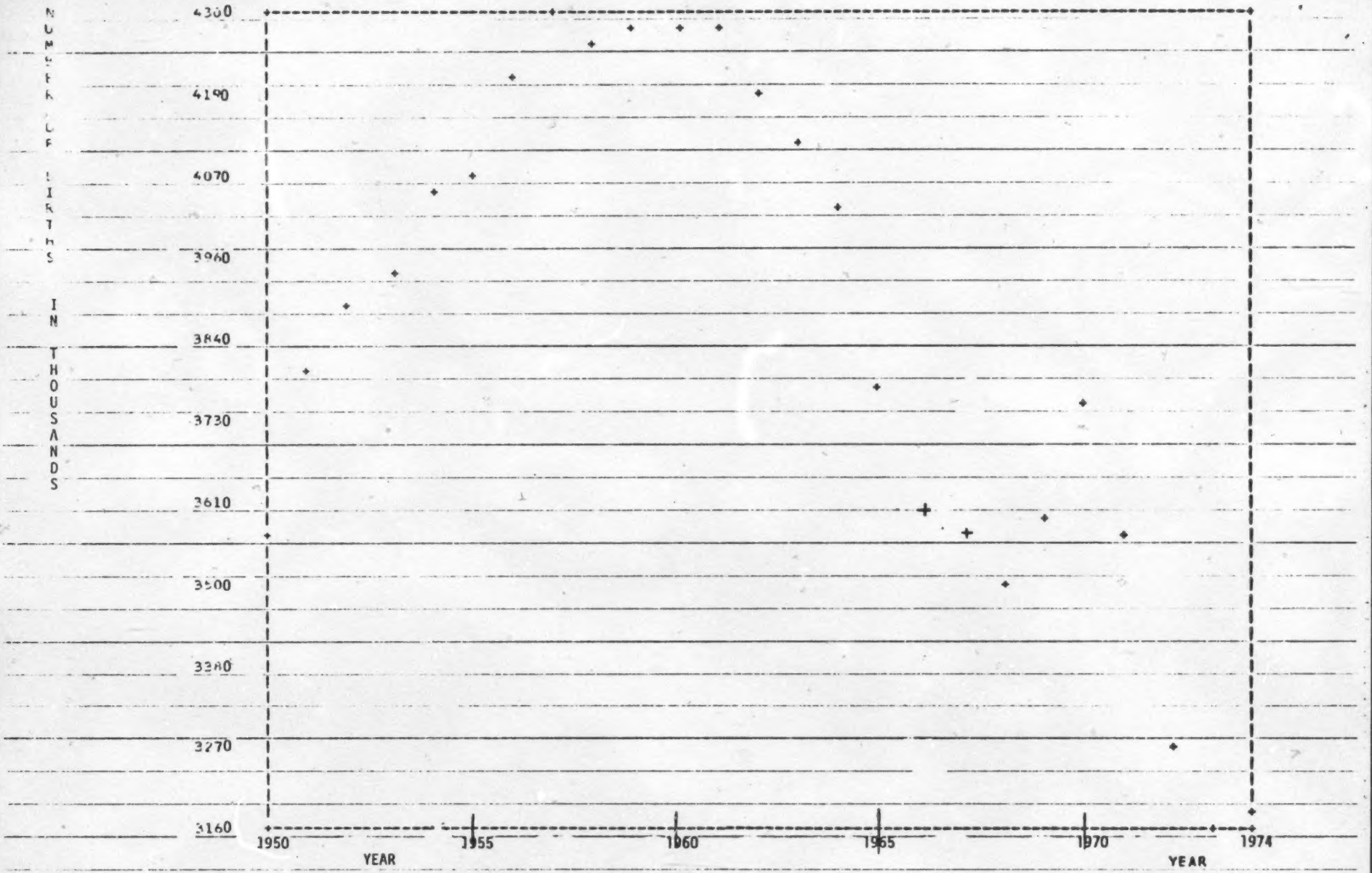


NETHERLANDS

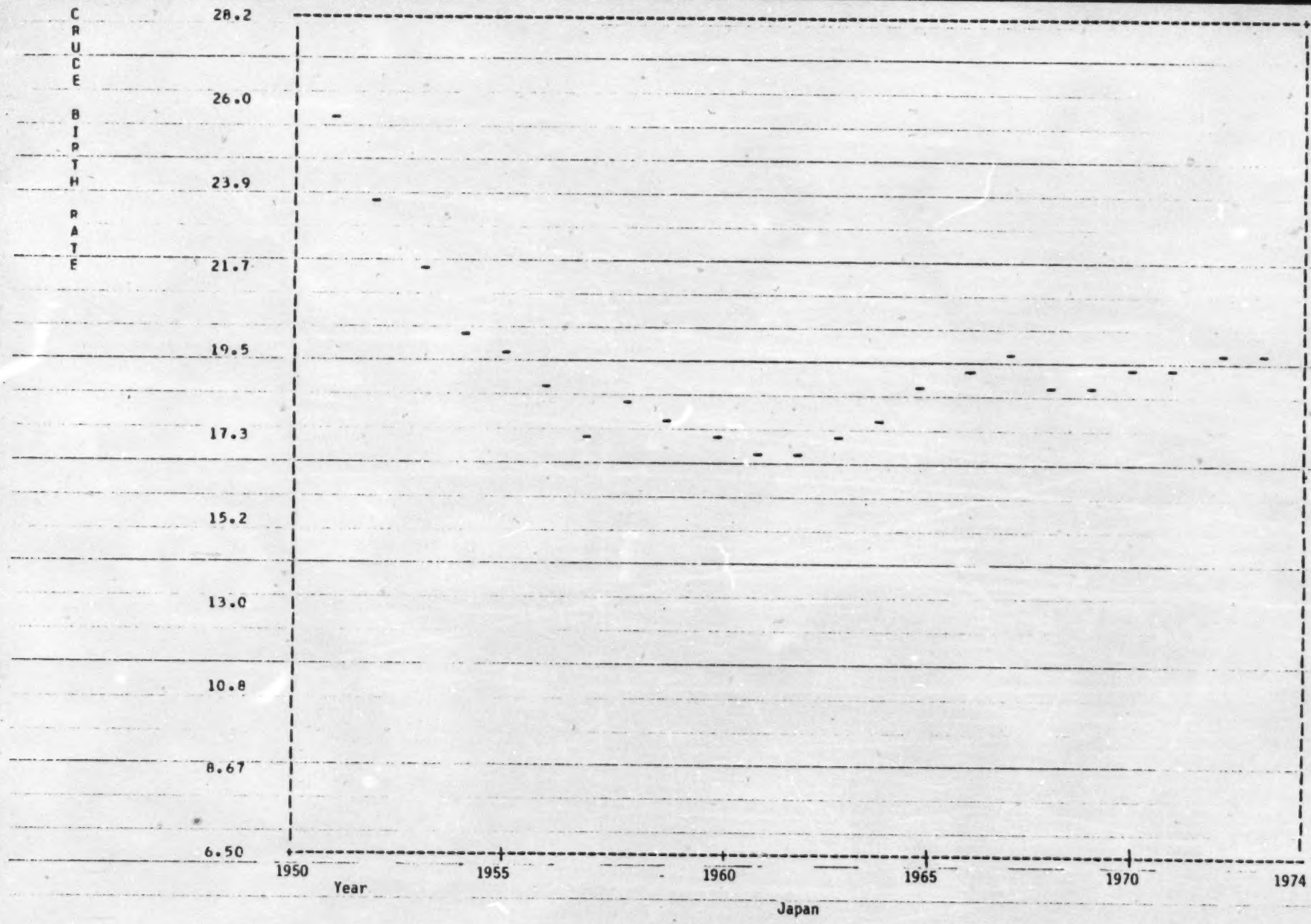


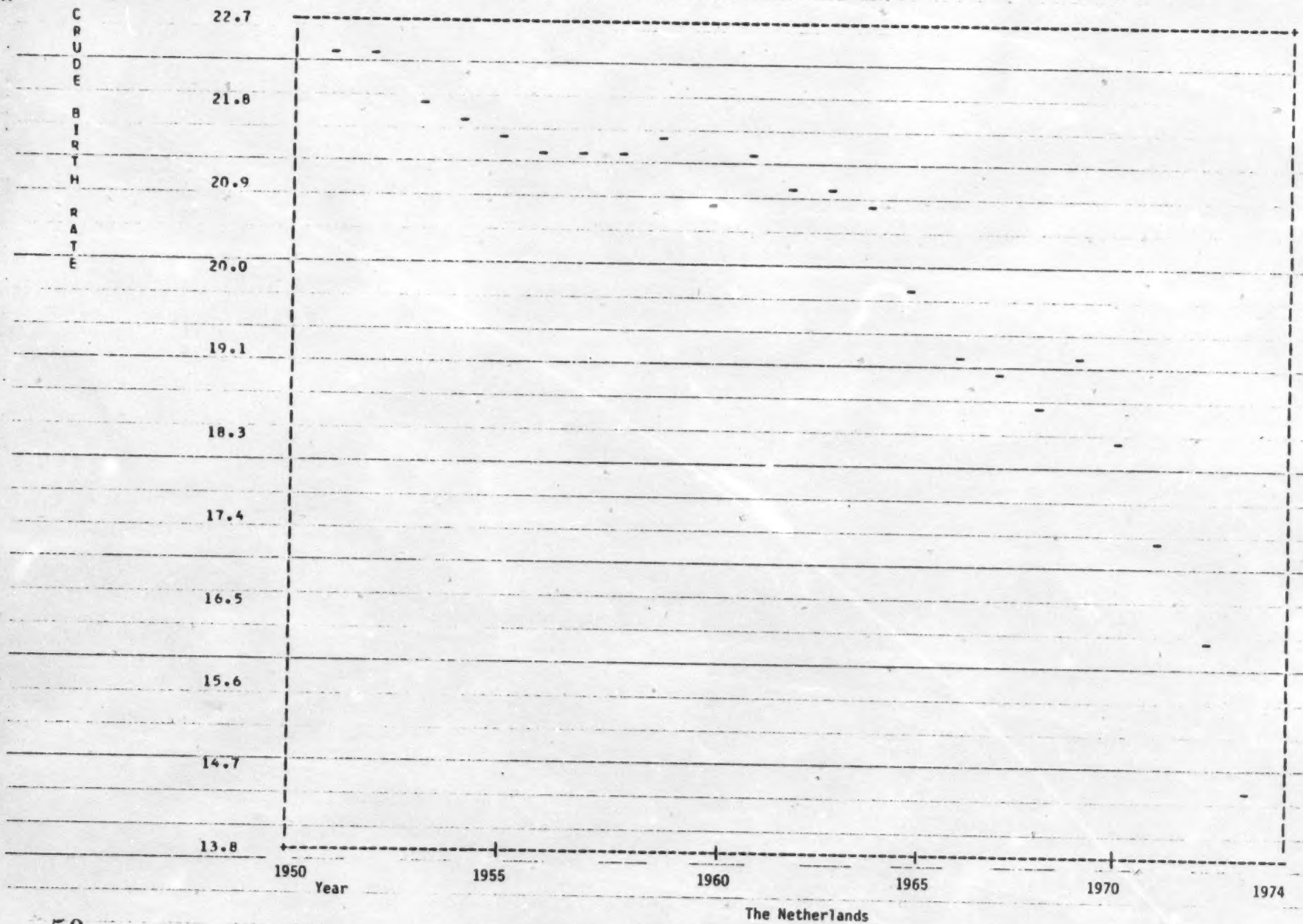
WEST GERMANY


NUMBER OF BIRTHS IN THOUSANDS
123
121
119
117
115
113
111
109
107
105
103
1950
1955
1960
1965
1970
1974
YEAR
SWEDEN
YEAR

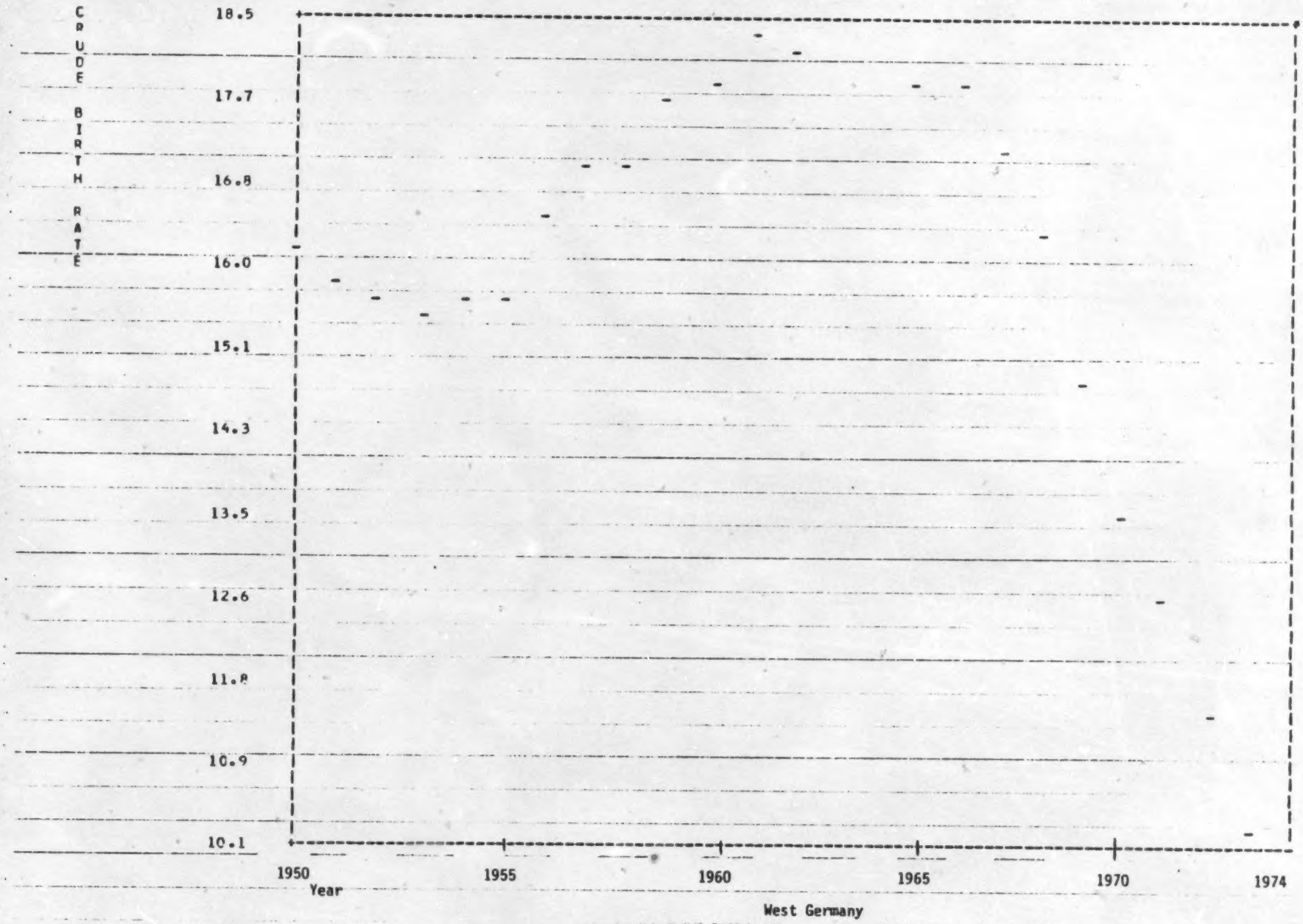


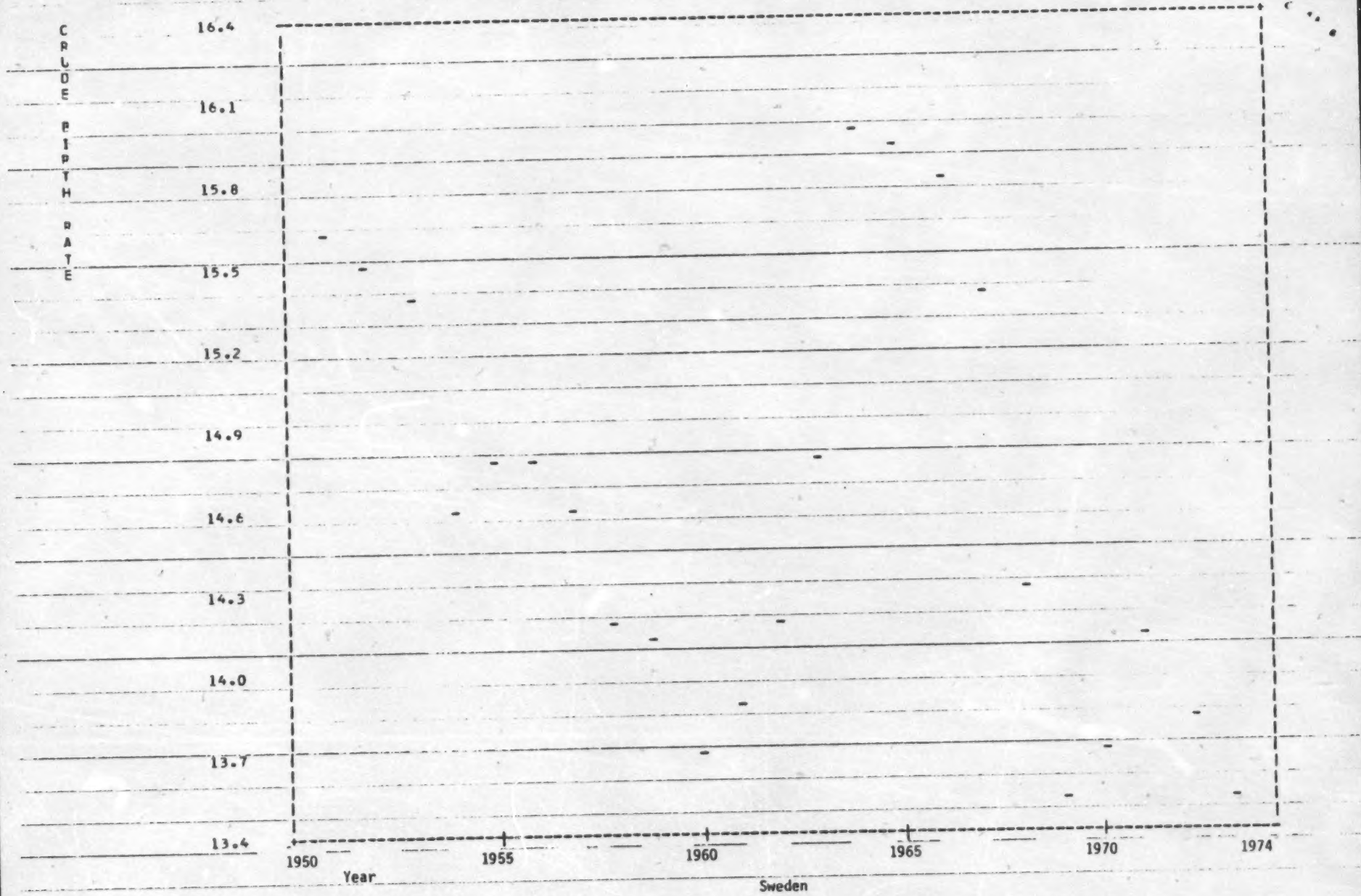
UNITED STATES


CRUDE BIRTH RATE
28.2
26.0
23.9
21.7
19.5
17.3
15.2
13.0
10.8
8.67
6.50
1950
1955
1960
1965
1970
1974
Year
Japan

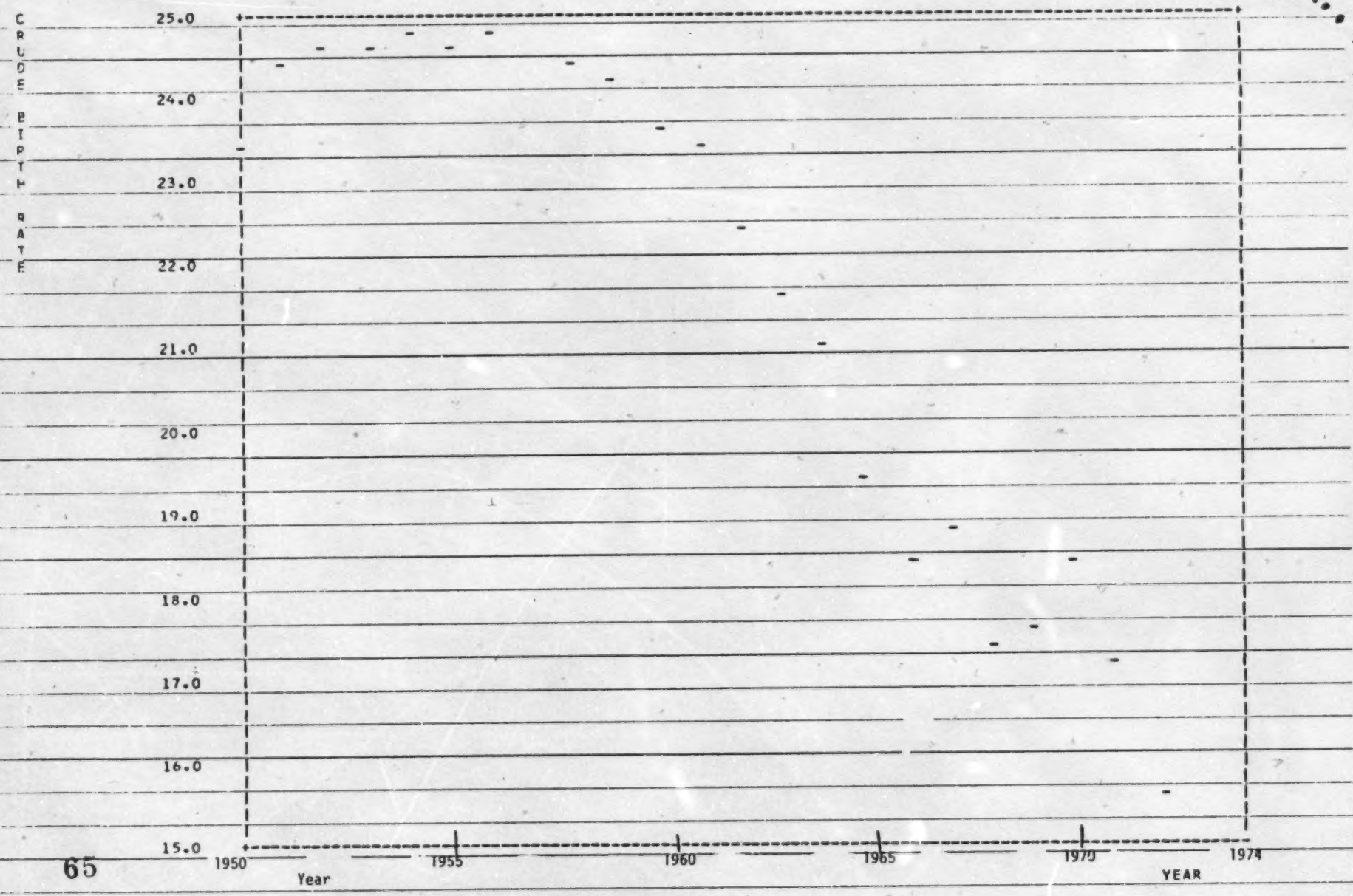


The Netherlands


CRUDE BIRTH RATE
18.5
17.7
16.8
16.0
15.1
14.3
13.5
12.6
11.8
10.9
10.1
1950
1955
1960
1965
1970
1974
Year
West Germany


CRUDE BIRTH RATE
16.4
16.1
15.8
15.5
15.2
14.9
14.6
14.3
14.0
13.7
13.4
1950
1955
1960
1965
1970
1974
Year
Sweden

MAY 2 1977



United States